

Elbert Hubbard ~ Interviews and Estimates **JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER** An Intimate Study of the Richest Man in the World By Elbert Hubbard



NOT long ago I had an engagement to play golf with John D. Rockefeller at nine o'clock in the morning. Arriving at the golf grounds on the minute, we had no more than climbed out of the automobile before Mr. Rockefeller arrived on a brand-new bicycle. His first words were: "On schedule, boys, on schedule! That's the thing!" And he leaped off his machine as lightly and easily as might a boy of twenty.

"Been wasting some of your hard-earned money," said I, pointing to the new bicycle.

"Yes, I am getting extravagant," said Mr. Rockefeller. "That wheel cost me just fifteen dollars. I saw them advertised and sent one of my boys down with the money. Twenty-five years ago that wheel would have cost one hundred dollars. And yet they talk about the high cost of living! Some things are higher, of course, but others are not. And as some one has said, 'If it costs more to live today than ever before, is it not worth the money?'"

In repose Mr. Rockefeller's face would be called homely, but when he talks to you, his countenance beams with animation, friendliness, appreciation, good-cheer—intelligence. I never met but one man who has the innate politeness and courtesy which John D. Rockefeller possesses, and that man is Sir Wilfrid Laurier. No one can meet Sir Wilfrid without thinking better of himself and better of humanity, and it is exactly the same with Mr. Rockefeller. Sir Wilfrid, however, has the handsome face of the French nobility. He is a king in demeanor. His raiment is royal-tailored. But Mr. Rockefeller, in golf clothes, reveals the man of power, with all the natural courtesy of the gentleman.

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER is as homely as Julius Caesar, and looks very much like him. Caesar never wore a uniform, and Plutarch says that he never lifted his voice high, nor did he criticize, berate nor condemn. Powerful men can afford to be polite. Strong men can well afford to be modest. Mr. Rockefeller is not the sanctimonious, dogmatic, joyless shrimp that we see pictured in the comic section. The fact is that he is a persistent joker. He bubbles with wit, and exudes good nature.

In the company, when I met him, that Saturday, was a little old Scotchman by the name of Sears, a neighbor of Mr. Rockefeller who drops in now and then to see how things are going on and discuss old times. This Scotchman has a close-cropped white beard, streaked with red. Mr. Rockefeller said to me: "Of course you came here, Mr. Hubbard, expecting to see me, but you did not know you were to have the pleasure of meeting Andrew Carnegie!" And he waved a hand in the direction of the little hoot mon.

With us on this occasion was Doctor Bustard who wore a pair of checked trousers very much the worse for wear. These trousers excited the lively attention of Mr. Rockefeller, who said to me, "Bustard wears 'em because he thinks I am very fond of checks."

Then calling to Bustard, he said: "Doctor, your breeches remind me of the

story about a tramp who applied to a preacher for aid, and as proof of his piety pointed to the patches on the knees of his trousers. 'This is all right,' said the dominie; 'but how about that patch on the seat of your pants?'"

"Oh," said the tramp, making a quick sidestep, "you know I am a backslider." And then Mr. Rockefeller added, "You see, Mr. Hubbard, that is a straight Baptist joke."

He hit the ball a good, straight, swinging stroke, and as we walked across the field he continued the Baptist talk, and said: "You know, the fact is there are neither Baptists nor Methodists now—not even Roycrofters. There are just men and women. As you say, none of us is wholly right and none wholly wrong, but I believe the world is surely getting better." Mr. Rockefeller had just presented one of his helpers with a "Ford," and the man was expressing his gratitude. One of the men present made the very natural remark, "Mr. Rockefeller, why didn't you give him an automobile?"

The subtlety was not lost on Mr. Rockefeller, who replied without a smile, "Well, if the price of gasoline keeps going up as it has lately, we will all be riding in Fords soon!"

The talk turned on the question of apples, and the new way they were being packed in boxes instead of barrels. Mr. Rockefeller recalled the days when he was in the commission business and every year handled thousands of barrels, going to Orleans County, New York, to supervise the packing.

"I used to have to watch those farmers close, for they couldn't get rid of the habit of placing the big, rosy, perfect apples on top," he said. And then, after a pause, he added, "When you buy a box of apples now you know beforehand they will be all alike clear to the bottom."

Then there was another little pause, and Mr. Rockefeller concluded with a sly twinkle, "Well, you know The Standard Oil Company has been severely criticised, but no one even yet has accused of putting the best oil on top. Our barrels of kerosene were always alike all the way through!" And after

an interval of absorption in the game: "I would like to live just fifty years longer," said Mr. Rockefeller. "Things are moving so fast, and they are moving in the right direction, that I just want to stay and see what a beautiful place the civilized world will be when business men awake to their opportunities."

AND so we played the nine holes through. At one point my ball got into a particularly bad lie. Mr. Rockefeller came to my rescue, picked up the ball, carried it out and put it in a perfect position, explaining in the gentlest way possible: "You know this is winter golf. All rules are off after November first."

He beat me six points, and I got back at him in the final score with, "You know what Herbert Spencer says about billiards?" "Yes," he said, "I know what Herbert Spencer says about billiards. But I would like to hear you tell Doctor Bustard." And so I told Doctor Bustard, and Mr. Rockefeller laughed as if he had never

heard the remark before.

As I putted into the last hole Mr. Rockefeller reached over, picked out the ball, fished an envelope out of one of his pockets, put the ball in the envelope, and handed me over the package with a gracious smile and a bow, saying, "As a souvenir of a very happy occasion!"

Doctor Bustard and I remained to play off one more hole and decide a tie.

When we started off home, at a bend in the roadway we saw Mr. Rockefeller. He had gotten off of his bicycle and was working with three Italians who were distributing gravel on the road. He had a shovel in his hand. We stopped and he cheerily called: "I am just showing these boys how to distribute gravel. See this?" He took up a shovelful and threw it, and with a dexterous twist of his wrist scattered the gravel as an experienced fireman flings a shovelful of coal and distributes it over a large surface. "I have not forgotten how—have I?" he said.

AND so I have quoted the world's greatest business man, resting my superlative conclusion on the following facts: 1. He is the richest man in the world. 2. His yearly income is more than that of any living man or of any man who has ever lived. 3. He is chief owner in thirty-four separate, highly successful corporations, with aggregate assets of one thousand million dollars. 4. As chief owner in these companies or corporations, he is the largest employer of high-priced labor in the world. 5. He markets a greater volume of goods at less expense for handling, advertising and selling than any man in the world. 6. He has helped make more other men supremely rich than any other man in the world. 7. He has more time to play than any other rich man in the world. 8. He has been more reviled, libeled, ridiculed and caricatured than any man in the world, and yet he has the respect, confidence and affection of the people who know him and who do business with him. 9. He has shown (Continued on Page 6)



Elbert Hubbard

Rev. Dr. Bustard
Golfing on the Rockefeller Grounds at Cleveland

John D. Rockefeller